

Connects Constituents with Officials Involved in Response Efforts

May 7, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) held a town hall today in Chalmette to listen to constituent concerns about the oil leak disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and provide information about the response efforts.

Representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana State University, Louisiana's seafood industry, and St. Bernard Parish officials took part in the town hall to help answer questions and listen to concerns.

"Louisianians are deeply concerned about the impact the oil leak will have on our coastal marshes, fishing grounds, and jobs," said Rep. Melancon. "Tonight's town hall put my constituents in direct contact with the officials and experts working to contain the oil slick and prevent it from damaging our fragile coastline. This was also an opportunity for us to listen to the ideas and suggestions of the people who will be most affected by the oil disaster."

"I thank everyone who took the time to show up and participate in this conversation, and will continue fighting to make sure their voices are heard by decision makers on the ground here in Louisiana and also back in Washington."

Speakers at the town hall included:

- o **U.S. Coast Guard Captain Edwin Stanton**, Federal Coordinating Officer for the Houma Incident Command Post and Captain of the Port of New Orleans
- o **David Rainey**, BP Vice President of Exploration for the Gulf of Mexico
- o **Frederick (Buck) Sutter**, Gulf of Mexico Regional Team Lead, Deputy Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce
- o **Patrick Banks**, marine fisheries biologist, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- o **Dr. Dek Terrell**, Director of the LSU Division of Economic Development, Ourso College of Business, Louisiana State University
- o **Mike Voison**, board member of Gulf Oyster Industry Council, owner of Motivati Seafood in Houma, Louisiana
- o Representative from the Small Business Administration

Congressman Melancon has been leading efforts in Louisiana to coordinate the federal and local response to the oil leak caused by the April 20th explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform. Congressman Melancon represents in the U.S. Congress the areas of coastal

Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes.

Wednesday, Congressman Melancon received a briefing on Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes' response plans to the oil rig disaster at BP's facility in Houma. He heard from Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph and a representative from Terrebonne Parish who detailed their plans for boom deployment and other protective measures to prevent the oil sheen from damaging their coastal marshes.

Tuesday, Congressman Melancon toured by boat the coastal marshes in St. Bernard Parish with parish officials and viewed the efforts of local fishermen to deploy boom. Millions of feet of protective boom have been deployed since the April 20th Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster to protect Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes from the oil slick.

In his recent conversations with local fishermen and parish officials involved in laying the boom, Congressman Melancon learned they face a severe shortage in boom material, hindering their ability to protect the coast. In response, Congressman Melancon [sent a letter to President Barack Obama](#) earlier today requesting military aircraft be used to help bring protective boom to the Gulf Coast more quickly.

Last Saturday, Congressman Melancon met with commercial and recreational fishermen in St. Bernard Parish involved in the oil leak containment work. While there, Congressman Melancon also [met with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson](#), St. Bernard Parish President Craig Taffaro, St. Bernard head of the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness John Rahim, and other local, state and federal officials to evaluate current efforts to minimize damage to Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes and fishing grounds.

Last Friday, Congressman Melancon traveled to lower Plaquemines Parish to meet with NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco to discuss how to lessen the impact of the oil leak on Louisiana's vital fishing industry.

Earlier that week, the Congressman contacted the Secretary of Commerce and the head of NOAA's Fisheries Service urging them to prepare to d [irect disaster funding to Louisiana's commercial and recreational fishermen](#).
[In his letter](#)

, Congressman Melancon noted that the oil intrusion resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster would likely damage the fragile habitats on which Louisiana's fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers depend.

Also last Friday, Congressman Melancon [toured by coast guard plane](#) the oil sheen in the Gulf of Mexico caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster with two Cabinet secretaries and the head of the EPA. Following the tour, the officials met with the head of BP and state and local officials involved in the response effort.

The administration visit followed a Wednesday [request](#) from Congressman Melancon that

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar immediately review the current response and containment efforts to the oil rig leak. In his letter, Congressman Melancon urged the Cabinet secretaries to evaluate how the containment efforts could be accelerated to prevent the oil from damaging Louisiana's fragile coastline and fishing grounds.

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